

3 NEPHI 17–19

John W. Welch Notes



3 Nephi 17 — Study Questions

In this chapter, we may ask ourselves the following questions:

- Why did Jesus teach people things that he says they would not be able to understand?
- What can a person do to understand such things better?
- What does it mean to “ponder upon the things” that one hears in Church settings?
- What do you find especially tender and impressive about the hour of healings here?
- Above all, what would you want the Lord to ask for, if he were to pray for you?
- What gives the Lord his greatest joy?
- What can we learn from the example of love that Jesus has for each child?

3 Nephi 17:6–10 — Jesus, Filled with Compassion, Healed the Nephites

3 Nephi cannot be read or understood outside of a family context. The Nephites came to the temple early in the morning. Men, women, and children were there, and may have come fasting; there would not have been much time for breakfast. For what reason were they there? It may have been some type of sacred gathering called, perhaps by Nephi himself, to determine what was going to happen next. They may have been there to give thanks to the Lord that they had survived. Regardless, they were all there. Everything which the Savior says in 3 Nephi is to men, to women, to grandparents, and to children. It is a message that applies to the entire human family.

When Jesus was about to leave at the end of that first day and cast his eyes about to the people, he saw that their eyes were steadfast on him, and that their eyes were filled with tears and his bowels, his soft inner being, was filled, not just with mercy but with

compassion, or as the German would say, with *Mitleid*, “with suffering together.” Jesus’s words in this tender moment are elegant, personal, and inviting:

3 Nephi 17:6–7

- A Behold, **my bowels are filled**
- B with **compassion towards you**.
- C Have ye any **sick** among you?
- D **Bring them hither**.
- E Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or withered, or deaf, or afflicted in any manner?
- D’ **Bring them hither**
- C’ and I will **heal** them,
- B’ for I have **compassion upon you**;
- A’ **my bowels are filled** with mercy.

Jesus then drew himself close to the people through a series of intimate “I/you” statements. Here we find five such interpersonal elements, the symbolic number of mercy and compassion. These lines emotively and intimately affirm God’s personal relationship to mankind:

3 Nephi 17:8

I perceive that **ye** desire
 that I should show unto **you**
 what I have done unto **your** brethren at Jerusalem,
 for I see that **your** faith is sufficient
 that I should heal **you**.

The Savior was filled with compassion, so he blessed them—those who had been injured or were ill or were blind, lame, or deaf. As they had come before to touch the Lord “one by one” (3 Nephi 11:15), they now came again one by one. The word “one” at the beginning of verse 9 is echoed again in the throng coming forward with “one accord,” and at the end it is found in the individual acts of love as Jesus healed them, “every one”:

3 Nephi 17:9

All the multitude, with **one** accord, did go **forth**

with their sick, and their **afflicted**, and their lame, and

with their blind, their dumb, and their **afflicted** in any manner;

and he did heal them every **one** as they were brought **forth**.

After they had been healed, those people came—the eyes, here again, are an important factor—and bathed his feet with their tears. I can only imagine that this was everyone—men, women and children—wanting and trying to reciprocate the love that he had shown to them.

If we are going to follow the example of Jesus, we too need to minister one by one. It is not enough to have an impersonal food bank say, “Go and get it.” There is more to it than that. We need to care for the individual needs of others, look at what their circumstances are, and love and serve them.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [*“Why Did Jesus Minister to the People One by One? \(3 Nephi 17:21\), KnoWhy 209*](#) (October 14, 2016).

For a discussion of the linguistic and literary elements in the translation of this text, see John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 179–198.

3 Nephi 17:11–15, 19–20 — Jesus Blessed the Parents

Jesus then wanted to give the people a great blessing. He placed himself in the middle of the crowd, with the children roundabout him, and the parents roundabout them. Before turning to the children, Jesus blessed their parents. He prayed for them, and the text says, “the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him” (17:15). The record of the incident says, “No one can imagine the joy that filled our hearts when we heard him pray for us unto the Father” (17:17). Jesus appreciated the sacrifices and devotion of parents. He may have been praying that they would be good parents, to have the strength and wisdom to be able to do what these little children needed to have done for them. He may also have been opening to their view the promises and blessings of the eternal nature of family relationships. As Jesus looked around after blessing them, he said to those parents, “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full” (17:20).

3 Nephi 17:17–18 — There Is Joy Especially in Temple Work

Psalm 16—which has been called “a prayer for admission to the temple”—declares that “in [God’s] presence is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11; cf. 21:6). The “presence” of the Lord was experienced in his holy temple (Psalm 11:4; 2 Chronicles 20:9), and the psalmist equated that presence with a feeling of joy. King David spoke of the joy that he felt at merely witnessing his people’s willingness to help build God’s temple (1 Chronicles 29:17; cf. Ezra 6:16) and the psalmist exclaimed, “a day in thy courts is better than a thousand [anywhere else]. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10). In other words, any type of service in the temple, no matter how lowly the position, will bring a joy that is preferable to being out in the world, amongst the wicked.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why is Joy Associated with Temple Work in the Scriptures? \(3 Nephi 17:17–18\), *KnowWhy* 372 \(October 12, 2017\).](#)

John W. Welch, [“Seeing Third Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,”](#) *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 36–55;

Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol Newsom, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, College Edition (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 786–787.

3 Nephi 17:21–23 — The Savior Then Blessed the Children

The Holy of Holies was said by the ancients to be a place of supreme joy. It was characterized by the joy of the Lord, and in this case, here was Jesus and all of these people celebrating with eternal joy. He turned to the children and blessed them one by one, and after that, he turned to the parents and he said, “Behold your little ones.” I do not think he was saying, “Look at your kids. Aren’t they cute?” He was saying in effect, “Behold, *your* little ones; they are now yours in a way that they were not before.” This blessing was confirmed in the presence of God, of Jesus himself, of witnesses, and of angels who then came down and ministered unto the children. It is an amazing thing to imagine the Lord Himself administering such a blessing to the parents and these children whom he loved so completely.

If we look at this afternoon of healing “every one” and at the blessing of the parents and their children “one by one” (17:9, 21) through a temple lens, one can appreciate even deeper why everyone can and must go through the temple one by one and personally do, step by step, the whole sequence of ordinances. And likewise, why we do proxy work for the dead, each of them one by one.

Such ordinances and blessings are individual matters, and covenants are made individually and personally with the Lord. Richard Holzapfel has explained, “According to the Book of Mormon model, ministering often occurs ‘one by one’ as disciples come in contact with the Savior and with one another. In many cases a personal ‘touch’ is a symbolic means of transmitting God’s love and power to an individual.” Elder Holzapfel also said,

Third Nephi, sometimes referred to as the fifth Gospel in Latter-day Saint circles, describes Christ's post-Resurrection ministry to the Nephites in terms similar to those used in the four New Testament Gospels. It emphasizes the individual experiences of the Nephite people with the resurrected Messiah, noting their direct physical contact with as well as His laying on of hands as the symbolic act of transmitting authority and power (Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “One by One: The Fifth Gospel's Model of Service,” in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2003), 378–388).

Elder Ronald A. Rasband likewise recalled in a Conference talk, ““Certainly, there is a very profound and tender personal message here. Jesus Christ ministers to, and loves us all, one by one” (Ronald A. Rasband, “One by One,” *Ensign*, November 2000).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Jesus Minister to the People One by One? \(3 Nephi 17:21\), KnoWhy 209](#) (October 14, 2016).

3 Nephi 17:24–25 — Angels Appeared and Ministered to the Children

3 Nephi affirms the reality that angels are in the presence of God and that they serve as messengers who can minister to us. We certainly need and could use that ministering assistance in our world today. Modern theology tends to abstract God, to make him rather impersonal but also to make him lonely. The biblical view of God is not a lonely, impersonal being. God is always surrounded by the hosts of heaven. God works with the archangels, Michael and others. Jesus himself is sometimes even called *the angel of the Lord*. Being an angel carries connotations of purity, of power, of righteousness, and of doing the will of the Lord. In 3 Nephi, the angels must have been rejoicing on this occasion just as they did when they sang at the birth of the Savior, “Glory to God in the Highest.”

In the ancient Israelite temple, in the view of the High Priest, the seraphim surrounded the cubicle of the Holy of Holies. The seraphim were burning, bright beings. We do not know what they were except that they were clothed in white robes and their brightness exceeded all description.

Angels come as messengers. The angel Moroni came with an important message, as did the angel Gabriel. The Lord needs other people, just as we need one another. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a testimony that heaven is made up of people working in unity and harmony. In Jesus' own intercessory prayers in John 17 and later here in 3 Nephi 19, he prays that we can be one with each other, one with him, and one with the Father, as he is. The purpose of that is to tell us the reality and the eternal nature of relationships one with another.

Angels come in the Book of Mormon to serve many purposes. In 3 Nephi, they were not so much to deliver the word of the Lord, because he—the Word of God—was there himself to do that, but angels were there to assist, minister, and to witness. These blessings were given in the presence of God, angels, and all these witnesses.

3 Nephi 18

Here are some study questions for you to consider as you turn now to the next chapter:

- How can a person better appreciate the administration of the sacrament today by noticing the details involved in administering the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18?
- How closely does our administration of the sacrament today compare with the administration of the sacrament here in 3 Nephi 18? See Moroni 4–5.
- What do you learn about prayer from verses 17–25 in this chapter? What do these verses teach people about when and how to pray?
- What should a person do if he or she feels unworthy to partake of the sacrament?
- When and how did these twelve disciples receive what we and they would probably call the Melchizedek priesthood?
- Where does Mormon show us “hereafter that this record is true” (18:37)?
- What did Jesus say to the disciples at this time? See Moroni 2:1–3.
- At the end of his first day with the people in Bountiful in 3 Nephi 18, Jesus instituted the sacrament and gave other instructions to the people. What connections can you find between his words of instruction in that chapter and the teachings in 3 Nephi 12–14?

3 Nephi 18–19 Introduction

3 Nephi has been referred to as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon, and in important ways chapters 18 and 19 are the heart of 3 Nephi, for in these two chapters, the Nephites entered into a new covenantal relationship personally with the Lord. In a way, chapters 18 and 19 can be thought of as the Ark of the Covenant at the very center of the Holy of Holies. There the people enter into a covenant with the Father. And then they

pray to the Father, and they see Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest offering prayers of intercession and blessing.

In ancient Israel, the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem only on the most sacred of days, bringing about purity and eternal blessings for all who would obey and be faithful. That was the peak of Hebrew worship, and a similar, more literal experience stands here at the zenith of the Book of Mormon.

3 Nephi, as a spiritual gem and model of purifying preparation, “contains those matters that the Savior himself felt were and are most important to the functioning of his church and absolutely essential for sons and daughters of God to internalize if they want to be exalted.” As I see it, “The book of 3 Nephi lays forth a holy template for how one may dwell forever in the house of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the great and eternal High Priest of all mankind.”

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Has 3 Nephi Been Called the Crown Jewel of the Book of Mormon? \(3 Nephi 17:17\), *KnoWhy* 210 \(October 17, 2016\).](#)

John W. Welch, [“Seeing Third Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,”](#) *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 36–55.

Andrew C. Skinner, *Third Nephi: The Fifth Gospel* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2012).

3 Nephi 18:1–9 — Jesus Instituted the Sacrament

As Jesus next administered the sacrament of the bread and the wine to these people, I think some of them would have noted that, previously in their old temples, twelve loaves of what were called shew-bread were placed daily on a table in the “Holy Place,” the room called the *Hekal*. Only the High Priest could eat of that holy bread.

Here, instead of twelve loaves, we have twelve disciples who carry the bread to all 2,500 people who are allowed to enter into this special holy relationship, as they enter into a covenant with the Lord. The bread now represents not just the broken body as it did at the Last Supper and does in the New Testament, but as Jesus says, “Partake of this in remembrance of my body *which I have shown unto you*” (3 Nephi 18:7). For 3 Nephi, the bread of the sacrament represented the substance of the body of Christ—the tangible, physical, resurrected body—that these people only a few hours earlier that day had touched, felt, and worshipped. They had testified that they had witnessed the resurrected Lord, with the signs of his suffering in his hands and feet. The tangible, physical nature of that bread reminded them, and reminds us, of the reality of the Resurrection that will be all of ours through the power of the victorious subduing of death and hell by Jesus Christ.

When I partake of the sacrament and contemplate not only the death and suffering of the Lord, but especially his consequential resurrection, I am transported spiritually into the book of 3 Nephi. That text gives me and all of us the opportunity to go to the Temple in Bountiful, where we, too, can touch the bread of eternal life.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, ["Why Did the Savior Emphasize His Risen Body in the Nephite Sacrament? \(3 Nephi 18:7\), KnoWhy 211 \(October 18, 2016\).](#)

3 Nephi 18:2 — Jesus Invited the People “to Sit”

In 3 Nephi 18:2, Jesus commanded the people that they “should sit.” Why did the Book of Mormon scribes bother to record and tell us that these people were all asked to sit? Is every word in the Book of Mormon there for a purpose? Presumptively, yes, and perhaps even for multiple purposes.

First, Jesus was concerned for their comfort. The multitude had probably been standing for a long time. In chapter 17, the children had been blessed, and the multitude had stood, then knelt, then stood again. The nature of the Savior is such that when people had been kneeling for a prayer for some time, he asked them to rise; when they were tired, he asked them to sit; and when they were hungry, he and his ministering angels provided spiritual and physical food. He was very aware of the needs of the people.

Second, Jesus asked them to sit to put themselves in a position to truly receive the sacrament. Latter-day Saints sit as the sacrament is blessed and passed to the congregation. Some churches have the congregation stand to take the sacrament, and some kneel, often at an altar. One may ask what difference any of that makes. Is there symbolism in being asked to “sit”? When people stand in a group, they are either waiting to be told what to do or watching something happening. People are invited to sit when they are about to be taught, and indeed partaking of the sacrament is a time to be taught. The Nephite multitude needed to be in a situation not only to be taught what they needed to know, but also to learn by the spirit of what they needed to repent.

Third, it was polite for them to wait upon the Lord. In many cultures and literatures, one must be invited to sit. Until then, humble servants stand ready and at attention. Isaiah saw that in the messianic day, Jerusalem would be invited to arise, come forth, and “sit down” (Isaiah 52:2; 2 Nephi 8:25). Alma promised the righteous that they would “sit down in the kingdom of God” (Alma 5:24; 29:17; see also Alma 34:36; 28:15; 3 Nephi 28:10). But kings were seated, and the exalted will “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Alma 7:25; Helaman 3:30). Seats were designated for chief judges and priests (Alma 50:40;

Mosiah 11:11). Jesus Christ himself “sitteth on the right hand” of God the Father in his power (Moroni 9:26). Sitting, especially in the presence of God, is not something casual.

Fourth, in this connection, the sacrament is also connected to the Passover meal, as it was for the Last Supper in Jerusalem. Not only are certain honors involved in being seated, but also having passed successfully through a certain degree of vulnerability. The Israelites had been through a series of terrible events in Egypt. Being seated at the Passover, protected by the blood of the Lamb, was an indication of now being safe and connected as a family and people. It signified that life was now more stable. Being seated for the Nephites may have been reminiscent of being seated at their Passover Seder and now with the Savior Himself.

3 Nephi 18:3–7— Jesus’ Original Words in Blessing the Sacrament Prayers

On this occasion, Jesus gave the sacramental instructions and injunctions himself. Naturally, he spoke personally and in the first person. So, he told people they did this “in remembrance of *my* body,” and told them to “always remember *me*.” Of course, when we read in Moroni 4, the prayer on the blessing of the bread has been recast into the third person. It says, “remember *him*.” These words of blessing and sanctifying have been switched from the first and second person in 3 Nephi 18 to the third person in Moroni 4–5.

I presume that this change probably happened very early after Jesus’s visit. Jesus administered the sacrament immediately a second time on the next day (3 Nephi 20:3–5), and again on the third day (3 Nephi 26:13). Having seen this done regularly, the disciples soon would have standardized this formality as the elders and priests continued to administer “the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church, ... according to the commandments of Christ,” and wherefore, they said, “we know the manner to be true” (Moroni 4:1). As they then did this, they would have retained the main words and expressions that Jesus himself had used. It would make sense that Nephi, as the chief disciple, decided which of Jesus’ words they were going to use, and how they were going to repeat what Jesus had done in administering the sacrament.

Indeed, most of the important words in our sacrament prayers are already to be found in the words of Jesus recorded in 3 Nephi 18:5–11. We can see how those sacred words have been adjusted grammatically to make clear sense when spoken, as an ordinance, by a representative of Christ in a congregational setting. After these prayers were formalized, they were then faithfully preserved, handed down, and included by Moroni among the treasured priesthood documents and along with three personal letters from his father that Moroni included at the end of the record, in Moroni 2–9, before sealing the plates and burying the record.

As you read the following words in 3 Nephi 18, take note of the bolded words in particular. They are the direct antecedents of our precious sacrament prayers:

⁵Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break **bread** and **ble^ss** it and give it unto the people of my church, **unto all those who shall** believe and be baptized in my name. ⁶And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you. ⁷And this shall ye **do in remembrance of my body**, *which I have shown unto you*. And it shall be a **testimony [witness] unto the Father that ye do always remember me**. And if ye do always remember me **ye shall have my Spirit to be with you**.

⁸And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and **drink of it**, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might **drink of it**. ... ¹⁰And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my **commandments**, and this doth **witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you**. ¹¹And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized **in my name**; and ye shall do it **in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you**, that ye may **witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me**. And if ye do always remember me **ye shall have my Spirit to be with you**.

Here is a chart that helps trace the words in the sacrament prayers precisely back into the words of Jesus at the ending of his first day among the people of Bountiful:

Moroni 4	3 Nephi 18
O God, <i>the</i> Eternal <i>Father</i> , we <i>ask thee in the name</i> of <i>thy</i> Son, Jesus Christ,	<i>ask the Father in my name</i> (3 Nephi 18:20)
to <i>ble^ss</i> and sanctify <i>this bread</i>	he took of <i>the bread</i> and break and <i>ble^ss</i> ed it (3 Nephi 18:3)
<i>to</i> the souls of <i>all those who</i> partake of it; that	unto all those who shall believe (3 Nephi 18:5)
<i>they</i> may eat <i>in remembrance of</i> the <i>body</i> of <i>thy</i> Son	this shall ye do <i>in remembrance of my body</i> which I have shown unto you (3 Nephi 18:7)

and <i>witness unto</i> thee, O God, <i>the</i> Eternal <i>Father</i>	it shall be a <i>testimony unto the Father</i> (3 Nephi 18:7)
<i>that they are willing to</i> take upon them	<i>that ye are willing to</i> do (3 Nephi 18:10)
the name of thy Son, and <i>always remember him</i> ,	that ye do <i>always remember me</i> (3 Nephi 18:7)
and keep <i>his commandments which he hath given them</i> ,	that <i>which I have commanded</i> you (3 Nephi 18:10)
that <i>they may</i> always <i>have</i> his <i>Spirit to be with</i> them, Amen.	<i>ye shall have</i> my <i>Spirit to be with</i> you (3 Nephi 18:7)

Moroni 5

3 Nephi 18

O God, <i>the</i> Eternal <i>Father</i> , we <i>ask</i> thee <i>in the name</i> of thy Son, Jesus Christ,	<i>ask the Father in my name</i> (3 Nephi 18:20)
to bless and sanc-tify <i>this wine</i> to the souls of	take of <i>the wine</i> (3 Nephi 18:8)
<i>all those who</i>	<i>all those who</i> (3 Nephi 18:5)
<i>drink</i> of it, that they	they did <i>drink</i> (3 Nephi 18:9)
may <i>do it in remembrance of</i> the <i>blood of thy Son</i> ,	<i>do it in remembrance of my blood</i> (3 Nephi 18:11)
<i>which</i> was <i>shed for them</i> ;	<i>which</i> I have <i>shed for</i> you (3 Nephi 18:11)
that <i>they may witness unto</i> thee, O God, <i>the</i> Eternal <i>Father</i> ,	that <i>ye may witness unto the Father</i> (3 Nephi 18:11)
<i>that they do always remember him</i> ,	<i>that ye do always remember me</i> (3 Nephi 18:11)
<i>that they do always remember him</i> ,	<i>that ye do always remember me</i> (3 Nephi 18:11)
that <i>they may have</i> his <i>Spirit to be with</i> them. Amen	<i>ye shall have</i> my <i>Spirit to be with</i> you (3 Nephi 18:11).

The next time you attend a sacrament service, I hope you will hear Jesus's words in these prayers. As one holding the designated priesthood office pronounces these holy words in Jesus's behalf, we get extraordinarily close to hearing, not only the ritual encasement of the traditionally received sayings of Jesus, but also what one might call the *vox ipsa*, the very voice and the very words as they originated with Jesus.

Further Reading

Welch, John W., "Our Nephite Sacrament Prayers," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: FARMS and Deseret Book, 1992), 286–289.

For a fascinating and more detailed study of the words which Jesus used in 3 Nephi 18 in blessing the emblems of the sacrament, comparing them with the words we use today in blessing the sacrament, which were revealed first in this dispensation with the translation of Moroni 4–5, see John W. Welch, "From Presence to Practice: Jesus, the Sacrament Prayers, the Priesthood, and Church Discipline in 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 2-6," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 119–139.

3 Nephi 18:1–11 — Passing the Sacrament in the Church Today

The manner and order in which the Savior administered the sacrament among these people sets the pattern for how we prepare, bless, and pass the sacrament. In all respects, we strive to honor and follow him in detail. We show this by remembering and reverencing his will in this holy observance, if for no other reason than that this was how he did it.

First, he "commanded" his twelve disciples "that they should bring forth some bread and wine" (18:1). While they no doubt turned to their wives to see if they might have any bread at home that would do, this assignment was given as a priesthood function, to see that the proper two items were brought which themselves would become the emblems of his holy presence and atoning power.

After the congregation was seated, Jesus "took of the bread and brake and blessed it" (18:3). Jesus did this himself on that occasion. At the end of his instructions, Jesus would ordain "one" and give him "power" that "he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people ... who shall believe and be baptized in my name" (18:5). Under this instruction, one man in the congregation was given priesthood authority to see that this ordinance is properly carried out. In Latter-day Saint wards today, this may be why the bishop is responsible for this ministrations. In that role, he symbolizes the One Lord Jesus.

The resurrected Savior then gave the bread "unto the [twelve] disciples" and commanded them to eat first (18:3). When they had eaten, he "commanded that they should give unto

the multitude” (18:5). In Latter-day Saint sacrament services today, as a mark of respect and for other reasons, the presiding officer partakes of the bread and water first, before the rest of the congregation. This is done in that way, basically, because the Lord did it that way. The Savior himself offered the sacrament to Nephi and the other disciples and they took it to the general congregation.

When a congregation sees the Bishop or other presiding leader take the sacrament, they can be assured that their leader is worthy to partake. How would a group of Saints react if the leader did not take the Sacrament? One may ask if that should matter, but it surely would. When a bishop has properly prepared himself and is seen partaking of the sacrament, his flock can have greater confidence to follow his guidance and counsel.

When the presiding person partakes of the sacrament, members are also reassured that proper procedures have been followed and the sacrament emblems have been blessed and dedicated properly. In most services today, a priest holding the Aaronic priesthood, looks to the bishop after saying a sacrament prayer to be sure that the prayer was correctly delivered.

Sometimes, the deacons who pass the sacrament emblems to the congregation wonder to whom should they take it after the bishop has received the sacrament. In fact, once the bishop has received the bread or the water, it does not matter who receives it next. Jesus gave one emblem to the disciples, and then they passed it to the multitude in no specific order. It then goes forward to all equally: to children, women, and men.

The Church normally has a policy that does not allow families to have the sacrament on vacations away from an organized unit. However, during the recent pandemic in which gathering in groups was officially forbidden, Church members are given authorization, under direction from their bishop, for a worthy priesthood holder within the home to administer the sacrament to the family.

As the details in this chapter are reviewed, it becomes clear that the providing of the sacrament to the Nephites was far more than just a nice story. It generated the order of the Church for carrying out the sacrament in the Restored Gospel. As we partake of the sacrament, we reenact not only what the first Apostles experienced with Jesus in Jerusalem at the Last Supper, but also what the Nephites were blessed to experience with the Savior during his visit in Bountiful.

3 Nephi 18:3–16 — When Did These People Accept the Covenant?

There was clearly a covenantal relationship between the Savior and the Nephites, but we might ask where the people themselves accepted to do His will by way of covenant? It is not the same as King Benjamin’s speech in which, when he got to the end, all the people at his temple cried with one voice, saying,

Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually (Mosiah 5:2).

These covenants happen at baptism and at the temple, but where in the text of 3 Nephi do we see covenant-making occur? It is during the sacrament. And here they covenant to remember Jesus and the body which he has shown them.

I love to point out that in Bountiful they were not told to partake of the sacrament in remembrance of the *broken body* alone—they knew that the bread, and the body, had been broken, and they knew what had happened—but more than that, in 18:7 it says, “This shall ye do in remembrance of my body, *which I have shown unto you.*” The resurrected Lord was offering the sacrament right then, in person. That sacrament was a token of the resurrected reality of the tangible body of Jesus with which he had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven.

When we pick up the bread to partake of the sacrament, we often think of how painful it must have been for his body to have been broken, but the substance of the bread also is tangible material that symbolizes the physical nature of the resurrected body. As people partake of the bread, they are symbolically touching the Lord’s body, just as the people at Bountiful did as they came forward one by one to ascertain the truthfulness of the resurrection and to know the literalness of Jesus’ being there with a body containing the marks of his death. They could testify with certainty that He had overcome suffering and death.

It is indeed a blessing to have access to both the sacrament of the Last Supper, which was the sacrament of the suffering and death of the Lord, and the sacrament in 3 Nephi, which is the sacrament of the Lord’s resurrected body. Just as the Bible and Book of Mormon go hand in hand, the Latter-day sacrament symbolizes both the broken body of the Last Supper and the risen body that the Savior revealed to the Nephites.

3 Nephi 18:4, 5, 9 — What Does “They Were Filled” Mean?

A frequently-asked question about 3 Nephi 18:4–5, 9 is, “What does ‘they were filled’ mean when the disciples and the multitude had partaken of the emblems of the sacrament? Does it mean literally, physically satisfied, spiritually fulfilled, or something else?” Although the exact meaning of the word “filled” is not given here, in 3 Nephi 20:9, during the second day of the visit and the second administration of the sacrament, the record makes this clearer:

Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled *with the Spirit*; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard.

The Nephites were filled with the spirit and with testimony through partaking of the emblems of the sacrament. The participants cried out with one voice and gave glory to Jesus. The Savior had predicted that very effect, in 20:8:

And he said unto them: He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

The intended meaning is that they were spiritually fed. However, when a person is filled with the spirit, they may also be satisfied physically and their emotional yearnings and material concerns can be reduced. For example, during a fast, pangs of hunger may not weigh one down because there is a sense of different fullness and greater satisfaction. In John 6:35, Jesus taught that he is “the bread of life”: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Although the text refers to the spiritual nutrition, then, it can be understood and applied in reference to being fully satisfied in other ways too.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did Alma Bless and Thank God After Eating?](#) (Alma 8:22),” *KnoWhy* 115 (June 16, 2016).

3 Nephi 18:15–21 — Instructions on Prayer

In these verses, the Savior taught the disciples and the multitude when and how to pray. He makes several important points.

In 3 Nephi 18:15, Jesus began by teaching the twelve disciples to *pray always* to avoid temptation. Under the old Jewish law, the faithful prayed three times a day. As long as they recited the morning, mid-day, and night prayer, that was enough. That they should pray always was a new rule, in which prayer became a continual course, not just a three-times-a-day event. Then in 3 Nephi 18:18, he turned to the multitude and reiterated that same guidance, “Ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation.”

Both statements, to the disciples (verse 15) and to the multitude (verse 18), begin with the words “Verily, verily I say unto you.” This introductory expression indicates the importance of the succeeding words, drawing attention and alerting the audience to the meaning. Here, the words “verily, verily” are repeated, and the emphasis, to “pray always lest ye enter into temptation,” is thereby doubled.

The admonition recalls the section in the Lord's Prayer in 3 Nephi 13, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Specifically asking to avoid temptation probably should be a part of every prayer. Whereas it is important to thank the Father and ask for blessings, Jesus advised his followers to pray constantly in order to defeat Satan, which is only possible with the Lord's help.

In 3 Nephi 18:18, Jesus next taught that they should always pray *to the Father in his name*. Approaching the Father in prayer throughout the day would keep them aligned, so to speak, with the North Star. Jesus was offering here to unite them with the Father through His name. That would have been something new for them. Had they been praying in the name of Jesus that way before? I do not think so. We do not have much indication of the way they prayed, but when you see Alma or Nephi praying, they are mostly praying to God and to the Lord, but not mentioning the name of Jesus.

In 3 Nephi 18:20, we are also taught that in prayer, the asker must believe that he will receive, and what is asked must be right. "Ask and ye shall receive," is frequently quoted in its simplest form, but "whatsoever ye shall ask ... if it be right, believing that ye shall receive it" is somewhat more precise. One example of this is found in 3 Nephi 19:9, in which the people prayed for what they most desired, and their righteous desire, the gift of the Holy Ghost, was given after they were baptized. Also, in 3 Nephi 19:24, the Nephites prayed "without ceasing, and they were filled with desire." As they continued to pray to receive guidance, their hearts were transformed and they desired only what was right.

The more intently one prays "without ceasing," the more one's will becomes conformed to the will of God. When one desires what the Father desires, prayers will be answered. However, this will not happen without continuous heartfelt prayer.

In 3 Nephi 18:21, the people were next instructed to pray in their families. They should not just pray at church, and of course not on a Rameumptom. Jesus commanded them—and us—to pray *in our families*; we must pray at home, and Jesus added, "unto the Father, always in my name"—again that direction. To this, Jesus added, "that your wives and children may be blessed."

Should asking, "Heavenly Father, please bless my wife and my children" be a part of prayer, or does it mean, "Have family prayer so that they will all be blessed"? Probably both. Our Heavenly Father is waiting to give blessings that are conditional upon our asking, and Jesus taught that blessings await the families who pray together.

There is nowhere in the Bible that talks about praying in the family. Nor is family prayer taught anywhere in the Doctrine and Covenants. So why do we have family prayer? Precisely because Jesus tells us to pray at home, to pray in our families. This is an

important instruction. Latter-day Saints strive to follow this scripture and have family prayer at least once daily. This text is so easy to glide over, but this is an essential part of the foundational order of the Church. The family is the basic and most fundamental unit of mortal life and of celestial glory.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Does Jesus Say that ‘Ye Must Watch and Pray Always’? \(3 Nephi 18:15, 20-21\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 344 (July 26, 2017).

3 Nephi 18:28–33 — Not Allowing People to Unworthily Partake of the Sacrament

The Twelve are next told that they need to watch for people who are partaking of the sacrament unworthily. The Savior is talking to those who have keys to make that determination. For the ordinary members of the church, that is not our business to worry about this concern. That is for the leaders of the church or of the ward to take care of.

In verse 30, we are told not to cast such people out. Why is it that we do not cast them out? What are we hoping for? We want them to repent and continue to build faith, so, the next thing we do is continue to minister to that person. If they persist, there is instructions for that too. In verse 31, Jesus said, “If he repent not, he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people ...” But we are, even then, to hold out the opportunity for repentance as long as someone is willing to cooperate and try to come through with the process.

Previously in verse 22, Jesus had said, “Ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you,” except under these guidelines. He pointed out also, in verse 25, “Ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world.” Jesus went out of his way to have 2,500 people do that, so he could make a point that, if at all possible, he does not want to lose or exclude anyone.

Brigham Young was once asked how long the Saints would do vicarious ordinances for the dead. His answer was, “The work will go on until every soul that can be saved has been saved.” It is not over when you die. It is not over until it is over, and that may be a long, long time. We will always continue to minister. I think that is the message here.

3 Nephi 18:37 — Authority to Give the Gift of the Holy Ghost

Later, in Moroni 2, Moroni recorded onto the permanent record the actual words which Jesus spoke on that occasion to his Twelve Disciples. There in a very holy moment, they were given the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. The sequence and timing in which the twelve disciples received these two powers offers an amazing insight. At the beginning of the first day, Jesus ordained them and gave them the power to baptize, the

power to cleanse with water. At the end of that day he gave them a second power—the power to cleanse by fire and with the Holy Ghost.

The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them— And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles. Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost (Moroni 2:1–3).

This was not just ordination to the priesthood in general; this was being given the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. These men had already been given the power and authority to baptize. That happened back in 3 Nephi 11. We learn something there too, if you are given the priesthood, it does not mean that you have authority to perform all of the ordinances of the priesthood. How do we know that? The example in the Book of Mormon answers that question.

I once explained to a Catholic priest in Germany that we have the Aaronic Priesthood or the Levitical, which is one order, and we have a second order called the Melchizedek Priesthood. To which he said, “Oh that is interesting. How do you get that idea?” I said, “In Hebrews chapter 7, it talks about the two priesthoods, but it does not make it clear that those two priesthoods are still important today, and that they are separate, and so you do not get them both all at once.” He thought that sounded reasonable. But more than that, I mentioned that we have authority for that teaching in the Book of Mormon. He did not find that binding on him, but he nodded with understanding how we utilized both the Bible and the Book of Mormon in reaching that significant doctrine.

While reading and translating 3 Nephi, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery became aware that they did not have priesthood power. Right after they had translated 3 Nephi 11, they went to the banks of the Susquehanna River and there received the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist. I am sure that they were thinking much the same thing when they came to the end of chapter 18. There too they would have realized that they had not yet received that additional, higher authority and that there was thus more yet to come. In fulfillment of the words that John the Baptist himself had given them, Peter, James and John soon would restore through Joseph and Oliver that power—the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Jesus's first day in Bountiful ended with this one last event. It was a private event for just the Twelve. The multitude did not even hear the words that Jesus spoke in verse 37. In verse 36, he touched all of the Twelve. I think this means that he put his hands upon them. Then the cloud came over them, and he ascended into heaven. Later, in Moroni 2, we learn what he said as he gave them on that occasion the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3 Nephi 18:38–39 — Jesus Ascended into Heaven

In this holy envelopment, the twelve disciples were able to see and testify that Jesus ascended back into heaven. They had seen him come down, and they testified that he had returned to that holy place. It would have been very assuring to know that he had not just vanished, but that he had gone deliberately. He had not abandoned his people, but promised that he would come again. The following day, the disciples were able to bring those people and many more back together at the temple to begin carrying out the instructions that Jesus had given them—to baptize them and to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. They then had the blessing of seeing his presence again and more fully as he appeared on the second day.

3 Nephi 19

These study questions pertaining to this chapter are in reference to the second day of Jesus's extended visit. Select two or three of these that resonate with you. How would you answer them:

- Why do you think we are told that they all returned to their homes?
- How did the Nephites know that Jesus would come back the next day?
- How did they know where he would appear to them?
- Do you notice any interesting things about the names of these twelve men?
- What is significant about the people dividing into twelve bodies? (19:5)
- Why is it important that they prayed (as we pray) "in the name of Jesus"? (19:6–7)
- How could all the twelve speak the same words that Jesus had spoken? (19:8)
- What did the twelve want most of all? (19:9) and how did they receive it? (19:10–14)
- What did the multitude see when the twelve were filled with the Holy Ghost?
- Who was commanded to kneel down on the earth? (19:16)
- What recognitions are embedded in calling Jesus "Lord" and "God"? (19:20)
- Why did Jesus "need" to pray to the Father? (19:19)
- What can one learn in 3 Nephi 19 about the Godhead? (19:19–23)
- For what was Jesus thankful in this prayer?
- What did Jesus ask for in this first prayer?

- How do the words “and they were filled with desire” strike you? (19:24)
- How does 19:25 compare with the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6:24–26?
- What do the words “white” and “whiteness” say to you? (19:25)
- What did Jesus pray for in this second prayer?
- How many times does the word “purified” and “faith” appear in this prayer?
- Who heard this prayer of Jesus? (19:33)
- What might Jesus have prayed for in this third prayer?
- How often did ancient people pray? How often should we pray?
- Why were such great things seen and heard by the Nephites?

3 Nephi 19:1–3 — The People Spread the Word of Christ’s Ministry

After that first tremendous day was over, I imagine that the Twelve went home, attended to their families, and then met together again. They may have conferred together all that night and recorded the words which Jesus had spoken, so that they could deliver them again the next day. They would have learned the difficulty of being a servant, that it takes work through the lonely midnight hours to be able to render that kind of service to the people which the Lord wanted them to do.

What is unmistakable in 3 Nephi is that the Savior calls on everyone. It does not matter who they are, he wants them to “repent and come unto me” and to be one with him. The disciples are told to go out and bring as many as they can the next day. I imagine there were plenty who said, “I cannot come, I am not worthy,” or maybe “I am too skeptical.” But the crowd that assembled the second day was even larger than that on the first day, and those were people who responded to the call. They came when someone invited them and said, “Please come; you will not be disappointed.”

The Twelve were directing this; probably sending people out in various directions, “You go here, you go there.” We can suppose that anybody who was close by the temple could not have missed what was going on, so when it says “abroad,” it was probably referring people out in the outlying areas, maybe in the farmlands, who would not have been aware of what was going on. They wanted to bring in as many as possible.

3 Nephi 19: 4–35 — Who Was the Recordkeeper on This Great Occasion?

Who was the recordkeeper in 3 Nephi? Probably Nephi, the high priest, I would say. When his father left, he handed over to Nephi all the sacred records. He had been trained as a recordkeeper. On a later visit, Jesus asked Nephi to bring the record that had been made of Samuel the Lamanite’s prophecy. Can you imagine the Savior proof-reading your work and saying, “You know, you are pretty good at this, but you missed something”? Of course, Nephi fixed it right away. He was the recordkeeper. While we do not know whether the words of Jesus were recorded in real time, they were kept diligently and promptly.

Even if his words were not written as they were spoken, the disciples no doubt remembered it soon enough that night. The ancient people had very good memories because their minds were not as cluttered as our minds are today. They were in the habit of memorizing, and it was not uncommon in ancient pedagogy for a teacher to simply talk and then the students would recite what the teacher had said. Today, we have recording devices, and because of that, we are lazy. Without that technology, people actually listened and remembered, *but* they would write it down as soon as possible so that it would be available accurately. That is probably why we have exactly the words that Jesus spoke here in 3 Nephi.

3 Nephi 19:9 – The Disciples Desired and Prayed for the Holy Ghost

In discussing the section for 3 Nephi 18:15–21, we mentioned this verse as an example of when the people prayed for what they most desired, and their righteous desire, the Holy Ghost, was given after they were baptized. How does that strike you?

We pray often for many things, but why do we not pray for this gift a little more often? Why would we not count that as the thing which we desire most of all in our prayers? Are we complacent because we have been given the gift of the Holy Ghost? Do we sometimes just take it for granted, or do we need to consciously seek it?

What caused them to pray for this very thing so quickly? Since they could pray for whatever they wanted, they could have prayed that the Savior would return to them. They could have prayed for peace with the Lamanites, or any number of things. However, they prayed for that which they desired the most, the Holy Ghost. It is the key to knowledge, goodness, and joy.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [*“Why Is 3 Nephi Important for Understanding the Godhead? \(3 Nephi 19:23\), KnoWhy 213 \(October 20, 2016\).*](#)

3 Nephi 19:11–14 – The Twelve Disciples Were Baptized in the New Dispensation

When they took upon them the name of Christ, they became like the high priests in the old temple, for the high priest wore on his forehead, literally, the name of Jehovah, and there was a promise in Numbers 6:27 that the Lord’s countenance would smile upon his people and that he would put his name upon them. This was an important step in the progress of these disciples, as they took the name of God upon themselves and enter into a covenant to keep these promises.

This meant that they had entered into a covenant to serve only one God, and especially not Mammon. This promise caused them, at the end of 3 Nephi, to put all their property together, and to have all their things in common. They did this because they had made a

covenant that they would consecrate whatever the Lord had given to them. They had made a promise that their eyes would be single to his glory. They had covenanted that they would lay up treasures in heaven.

At the end of 3 Nephi, Jesus asked what the disciples would like: “What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?” Three of them said that they would like to stay on this earth and teach more people. They were willing to offer all that they had to have a fullness of joy with Heavenly Father. The other nine wanted to stay with the Lord, and we understand that. However, the three who stayed behind, postponing their own spiritual progress in that way in order to be servants, were also keeping the covenant that they made to serve, to minister, and to continue to enjoy the blessings of seeing people helped as they come unto Christ.

3 Nephi 19:19–23, 27–29 — Jesus Offered an Intercessory Prayer

David Paulson has written beautifully and compellingly on the topic of Jesus’ special prayer which was given as Jesus interceded in our behalf by pleading with the Father. We learn much about the nature of the Godhead by watching Jesus interact with his Father and how he prays to God and what he prays for. It gives us the earliest Latter-day Saint document pertinent to the Godhead. To us it is not so mysterious.

Here you have a fully represented concept about God and Jesus, in a beautiful text that we are perfectly comfortable with. We understand this; it seems so obvious. But there are many historians who think that Joseph Smith did not understand the nature of the Godhead until much later, and that it was not even really until Nauvoo that he began to really articulate things which we understand as being essential to the doctrine of the Godhead. People who wonder about that have perhaps not read 3 Nephi carefully enough. David Paulson argues that there are several features of the relationship between the Father and the Son that are represented here as separate but united beings. This text presents a very powerful statement of the understanding of the Godhead as three separate beings perfectly united in purpose.

Theologians David L. Paulsen and Ari D. Bruening, in fact, have identified five different ways 3 Nephi depicts the Father and the Son as separate, individual beings.

Ways Father and Son are Differentiated in 3 Nephi

Godhead Differences	3 Nephi
1. Christ Speaking of God as “My Father”	3 Nephi 14:21 ; 27:16 ; 28:10
2. Christ Praying to the Father	3 Nephi 17:14 ; 18:19 ; 19:19–20
3. Christ Obeying the Father	3 Nephi 15:14 ; 16:16
4. Christ’s Ascension to the Father	3 Nephi 15:1 ; 17:4 ; 18:27 ; 26:15
5. Other Ways Father and Son are Distinguished	3 Nephi 11:35 ; 15:24 ; 16:6 ; 20:26

While several passages in 3 Nephi speak of the oneness of the Father and the Son ([3 Nephi 11:27, 36](#); [20:35](#); [28:10](#)), Jesus clarified that the nature of this oneness especially when he prayed with His disciples, where He prayed that His disciples may be one with Him in the same ways “as” He and the Father are one ([3 Nephi 19:23, 29](#)). Paulsen and Bruening thus conclude that “3 Nephi contains extensive and persuasive evidence that Jesus Christ and his Father are distinct persons” with an exalted “oneness” that functions most vividly in terms of their uncompromising state “of purification, alignment, and divine in dwelling within a community.”

Taking this another step in this direction, Robert L. Millett once asked this provoking question: If God and Jesus are existentially one being, “why did Jesus need to pray?” His answers are helpful, as we stretch to conceive the matchless harmony that exists between the members of the Godhead:

To begin with, during his mortal ministry he set aside much of the power and glory he had enjoyed before he came into the world (John 17:5). Paul wrote that Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7–8). Other translations render the above passage as “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (New American Bible; see also New Revised Standard Version; emphasis added). By choice Jesus did not turn the stones to

bread, although he certainly possessed the power to do so (Luke 4:3–4). By choice Jesus did not cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and anticipate divine deliverance, although he had the power to do so (Luke 4:9–12). By choice our Lord did not call down legions of angels to deliver him and his in the Garden of Gethsemane, although he indeed possessed the power to do so (Matthew 26:51–54). And by choice the Master of ocean and earth and skies did not come down from the cross and bring an end to the pain and suffering, the ignominy and irony of his crucifixion and death, although the power to do just that was within his grasp (Matthew 27:39–40; Luke 23:39).

By setting aside power and glory, he was able to know mortality in its fulness, to know by experience what it felt like to be hungry, thirsty, tired, snubbed, ridiculed, excluded; in short, he chose to endure the throes and toils of this estate so that he might then be in a position to succor his people (Alma 7:11–13; D&C 62:1). Thus when he felt the need for reassurance, he prayed to his Father in Heaven. When he needed answers or perspective, he prayed. When he needed the sacred sustaining influence of the Father in his darkest hours, he prayed, prayed earnestly. Because of the Spirit, which conveys the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:16),¹⁶ he was in the Father, as the Father was in him. They were one...

Jesus prayed to the Father because he loved the Father. Jesus prayed to the Father because it was a reverential way of speaking to his Father, who is forever worthy of the reverence of his children. Jesus prayed to the Father because they enjoyed communion. That word communion is an especially meaningful word, one that is worth much reflection. President David O. McKay observed that spirituality is “the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite.” Jesus possessed perfect spirituality because he had overcome the world (John 16:33; D&C 101:36) and because he enjoyed perfect communion with the Father. This pattern is a call to you and me, is it not, to live our lives in such a manner that we cultivate the cleansing and revelatory benefits of the Spirit more and more; that we yield our hearts unto God (Helaman 3:35) and have an eye single to his glory (D&C 88:67); that we allow our consciences to be strengthened, our judgment to be refined, and our desires to be educated.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Is 3 Nephi Important for Understanding the Godhead? \(3 Nephi 19:23\), *KnoWhy* 213 \(October 20, 2016\).](#)

David L. Paulsen and Ari D. Bruening, “The Social Model of the Trinity in 3 Nephi,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book, 2012), 191–233, see pages 193, 204, 214.

Ari B. Bruening and David L. Paulsen, “The Development of the Mormon Understanding of God: Early Mormon Modalism and Early Myths,” *FARMS Review of Books* 13, no. 2 (2001): 109–169.

Robert L Millet, “The Praying Savior: Insights from the Gospel of 3 Nephi,” in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book, 2012), 142–144.

3 Nephi 19:25 — The Disciples Appeared as Holy as the Savior

Here in 3 Nephi 19, the twelve disciples who are ordained by Jesus have their garments shining even as brightly as angels. That is not a trivial point. That shining glory is a foreshadowing, a guarantee, a down-payment of the great eternal glory that they and we all can eventually have in the Celestial Kingdom. These angels become not just messengers in word, but physical messengers, embodiments of the promise of glory that all the righteous who come unto Christ and obey his words and keep his commandments and enter eternally into his presence by doing His will can have.

3 Nephi 19:25 – The Priestly Blessing

What does 3 Nephi 19:25 have to do with the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24–27? Not too long ago, a little silver scroll was found in Jerusalem in a tomb that was excavated. A road crew was digging a highway and excavating a road and uncovered a burial chamber. In the excavation, a small silver scroll was discovered, which had been worn as an amulet around the neck of a young woman who had been buried. The date of the tomb and the script on this scroll was from the 7th Century BC, and on it, written in tiny letters, were the words of the Aaronic Priesthood blessing in Numbers 6:24–27.

This discovery becomes the earliest biblical text that we have. It is verbatim; it is exactly the same as this Hebrew text that has come down to us. This would have been the same text that was on the Brass Plates. And this makes people now rethink much about the dating of that priestly text in particular, but other texts like it as well.

This text, this blessing, was spoken twice every day in the temple in Jerusalem at the time of the daily offering. Morning and night after the offering was given, the high priest would bless all the people. This is a good reason to think that this second-day gathering is again happening at the temple. We do not know what the Savior said. The text does not give us the words, but in 3 Nephi 19:24–25, it says “and it came to pass that Jesus blessed them.” What kind of words would he have used? Here is the traditional high priestly blessing:

Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:23–27)

There are important echoes in the text of 3 Nephi 19 with these words. The Nephite record says: “His countenance did smile upon them and the light of his countenance did shine upon them.” The face of God is emphasized three times in this text. The face, the countenance, is what the ancient blessing was all about: That you may see his face, that he will smile upon you with his face of approval, that you will know that he loves you, that he accepts you. That is the effect of the blessings of the priesthood and of these ordinances, that when they are effective in your life, you will know that the Lord smiles upon you, that he loves you, and that he can and will be gracious and good to you. What greater blessing could there be?

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Jesus Allude to the Priestly Blessing in Numbers 6? \(3 Nephi 19:25\), *KnoWhy* 212 \(October 19, 2016\).](#)

3 Nephi 19:31–34 — Jesus Prays in Language That Can’t Be Written or Spoken

Are you glad that there are things left out of this record? A little later it will even get to the point where the record says that there are things that cannot even be uttered. When we go to the temple, holy things are usually things that we cannot fully communicate to other people, even if we wanted to and were allowed to. Partly, it just that it is impossible to communicate them, but also because they are so sacred that we are under an obligation not to communicate them further.

I am glad that everything is not spilled out here in the open. When it comes to sacred things, there are things that you should only learn through sacred instruction and by personal revelation in an interwoven context that circumscribes and interrelates all truths into a harmonious whole. As we get a glimpse of what is here in 3 Nephi 19, this is what is available to us in the temple, being taught there by sacred experiences, by the Holy Ghost, and through revelation. Then you can truly appreciate the eternal doctrines and everlasting principles of the Father. If these were simply told to us, we would not appreciate them. We must know in an abundance of ways the source from which they spring.